

# Attorney: Pollution in nail dropped

## Documents show EPA dismissed results of 1985 tests

**By Laurence Bamonte**  
Staff Writer

Water regulators believed they had found rocket-fuel contamination in underground water south of Azusa 12 years ago, but rejected those results — concluding the testing method was flawed, according to documents released Monday. The contaminant perchlorate, which has since shut down four Valley wells when discovered in a new round of refined testing this year — was detected in 1985 in tests ordered by the federal Environmental Protection Agency, according to tests obtained by an attorney handling a water pollution law suit.

However, a year later the EPA discounted the tests, per-

forming by an independent lab, which had found nitrate pollution common in the area, could cause false positive results for the rocket-fuel additive.

Admittedly the test was crude, but they had reason to say there was perchlorate. The further investigation was that there was a notice of a doubt about it," he said.

That we learned a lot more about the health effects of perchlorate," counted the 1986 results by May and that turned more people to mid-potter analytic methods, he said. It was only this year, he said, that the state Department of Health Services developed a reliable method.

The 1985 results showed that wells operated by eight water purveyors, including "the Dial," states the EPA report.

has since been named among 19 companies potentially responsible for a 25-square-mile plume of water south of its plant polluted with industrial solvents and perchlorate.

EPA officials said Monday they were at a loss to comment on the documents, since they were unable to immediately locate them. However, Keith Mata, chief of the EPA's Superfund program in California said it has taken

steps to develop reliable methods of detecting perchlorate.

"What happened over there is

that the San Gabriel Valley Water Co. for pollution caused by industrial solvents,

formed by an independent lab, a potential problem," said Pasadena attorney Mark Algori, who represents the Committee Against Toxic Water Exposure in the San Gabriel Valley and is preparing a lawsuit.

"Somebody woke up out of their sleep, and all of a sudden we have something in 1987 that says there was perchlorate. The ball was dropped. There was no doubt about it," he said.

Please turn to WATER/A

Perchlorate, which has been linked to thyroid disorders, is used as an accelerant in solid rocket fuel. It inhibits the absorption of iodine by the thyroid gland, which regulates growth and metabolism.

The EPA ordered the 1985 tests noting Aerojet had developed and tested rocket engines at its Azusa plant. The company

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## WATER

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in comparison, the four wells tested last year after the latest testing conducted by state health officials had levels no higher than 18 parts per billion. "There was a problem with the scientific method," said Carol Williams, executive officer of the Watermaster. "We don't know that there were in fact high levels of perchlorate at that time. Everything now points to nitrate."

Algorri's firm is already suing the Southern California County Water District and the Water Co. for pollution caused by industrial solvents,